

House Republican Press Release

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House Passes School Nutrition Bill



Legislation Aimed At Combating Obesity, Improving Childhood Health

HARTFORD- The House of Representatives passed legislation last evening cosponsored by Representative Themis Klarides (R-Derby) aimed at improving the overall health of children in school

The bill requires a minimum amount of physical exercise for students in grades kindergarten through five and requires the establishment of School Wellness Committees. It limits the beverages that may be offered in schools and requires boards of education to implement and enforce a State Department of Education (SDE) published list of recommended snack foods that may be offered to students at schools. The bill lowers, from 80 to 40, the percentage of free and reduced-priced lunch eligible students that triggers mandatory federal school breakfast program participation for severe needs schools. Finally, the bill requires the creation of a database for schools to use in ordering Connecticut grown foods for school meals.

“There has been an alarming trend across the nation to cut back on physical activity for students, in an attempt to squeeze more academic instruction time into the day,” said Representative Klarides. “The level of obesity among children and adolescents has doubled in the past twenty years. This has contributed to an overall poor level of physical health in children in our public schools.”

Klarides noted significant research studies that demonstrate the poor health habits of school age children in the country. Among those is a recent report published by the Journal of the American Medical Association dedicated to obesity research.

“That report details how 15% of American children are severely overweight or obese,” said Representative Klarides. “Developing poor exercise habits and becoming sedentary and obese that early in life will have a major impact on the health and quality of life that a child will have when he or she grows older. These children will be at a great risk for significant obesity-related health problems in the future, not the least of which are diabetes and orthopedic problems.”

Representative Klarides expressed her hope that mandating schools to focus a little bit of time on their physical well-being would have long-lasting benefits for the overall health of children in public schools, as well as help their academic performances in the long run. “Someone who has greater physical health is able to think more clearly and has a higher capacity for performing mental tasks,” said Representative Klarides. “The two issues are certainly linked. Kids who are healthier will do better overall in school.”

The House amended the Senate version of the bill, adding back in diet sodas and electrolyte replenishing drinks. Representative Klarides opposed that amendment. “Diet soda should be out,” she said.

The Senate previously passed the bill on April 27th. The amended bill now heads back to the Senate.

